

# The GIRL and the BILL

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER X.

At the expense of a scolded hat Herbert Orme saved from arrest a girl in a black touring car who has caused a traffic jam on State street. He buys a new hat and is given a five dollar bill with "diamond" but the person you pay this to," written on it. A second time he helps the girl in the black car and learns that in Tom and Bessie Washington they have mutual friends, but gets no further hint of her identity. He discovers another inscription on the marked bill, which in a futile attempt to decipher it, he copies and places the copy in a drawer in his apartment. Senior Portillo, South American, calls and claims the marked bill. Orme refuses, and a fight ensues in which Orme is overcome. He calls in Senior Alcantarante, minister from his country, to vouch for him. Orme still refuses to give up the bill. He learns that a Jap has called for him. Orme goes for a walk and sees two Japs attack Alcantarante. He rescues him. The minister tries diplomacy, but fails to get the marked bill. Returning to his room, Orme is attacked by two Japs who effect a forcible exchange of the marked bill for another. Orme finds the girl of the black car waiting for him. She also wants the bill. Orme tells his story. She recognizes one of the Japs as her father's butler, Maku. The second inscription on the bill is the key to the hiding place of important papers stolen from her father. Both Japs and South Americans want the papers. Orme and the "girl" start out in the black car to quest of the papers. In the university grounds in Evanston the hiding place is located. Maku and another Jap are there. Orme tells Maku and the other Jap escapes. Orme finds in Maku's pocket a folded slip of paper. He takes the girl, whose name is still unknown to him, to the home of a friend in Evanston. Returning to the university grounds Orme gets in conversation with a student at the life-saving station. They hear a motor boat in trouble in the darkness on the lake. They and the crippled boat. In it are the Jap with the papers and "girl." She jumps into Orme's boat, but the Jap clings pursuit. Orme finds on the paper he took from Maku the address, "341 N. Parker street." He goes there and finds that Arima, teacher of Judo-itsu in the third floor. He calls on Arima, clairvoyant, on the fourth floor.

## CHAPTER IX.—Continued.

"I've come up the stairs when his door was open."

"Does he seem to be pretty busy with his teachings?"

"Evenings, he is. And some come to the afternoon. I always know, because they thud on the floor so when they wrestle."

"And mornings?"

"He generally seems to be away mornings."

"I fancy he's what you'd call a noisy neighbor," said Orme.

"Oh, I don't mind. There's more or less noise up here sometimes." She smiled frankly. "Spirits can make a lot of noise. I've known them to throw tables over and drag chairs all around the room."

"Well"—Orme was not interested in spirits—"be sure you don't let anybody in here until I come back."

Again she nodded. Then she went into the reception hall and he heard her push the bolt of the door. She did not return, but her steps seemed to move into one of the other rooms.

Orme went to the window, pushed it up, and climbed out on the fire escape. He was glad to see that the wall across the court was windowless. He might be observed from the buildings that backed up from the next street, but they apparently belonged to a large storage loft or factory. There were no idle folk at the windows.

The window of the room below was open. This was in one sense an advantage—and Orme blessed the Japanese athletes for their insistence on fresh air; but on the other hand, it made quietness essential.

Slowly he let himself through the opening in the platform and moved a few steps down the ladder. Then he crouched and peered through the dingy lace curtains that were away in the breeze.

The interior was dim, but Orme succeeded in distinguishing the furniture. There were straw mats on the floor and several chairs stood about. At the opposite side of the room was a closed door. From his knowledge of Madam Alla's apartment, Orme knew that this door opened into the hall of the building, and the square ground glass, with its reversed letters of the athlete's name, told him that it was used as the chief entrance. Madam Alla preferred her clients to enter into another room.

In the farther corner of the interior Orme saw a large square table. It was covered with a red print cloth, which hung over the edge, nearly to the floor. If he could reach that table and conceal himself beneath it, his position would be better.

And now he suddenly remembered that the outline of his head would be visible against the outer light to anyone within. The room seemed to be empty, but—at that instant—he heard a door open. He drew his head up. Some one was moving about the room.

The steps went here and there. Chairs were shifted, to judge from the sound. But evidently there was only one person, for Orme could hear no voices. He decided that Arima was preparing for visitors.

Again he heard a door open and close. Had Arima gone out, or had some other person entered? Orme waited a moment, listening; no sound came from within. He lowered his head and peered. The room was empty.

Arima might return at any moment, but the chance had to be taken. Quickly, silently, Orme descended to the platform, slid over the sill and tipped over to the table. Another instant and he was under the cover.

## "Find the American."

As Orme let the table cover fall back to its normal position and turned to get himself into a comfortable attitude his hand touched something soft and yielding. For a moment he was startled, but the sound of a throaty purr and the realization that his hand was resting on fur soon told him that his companion in hiding was a cat.

He wondered whether the Japanese liked pets. From what little he knew of Japanese character it did not seem to him consistent that they should care for animals. Yet here was a peaceful tabby.

In order to accommodate himself to his close quarters, Orme had to double his legs back, resting on his thigh and supporting the upper part of his body with one hand. The cat settled down against his knee.

The light filtered redly through the table cover. To his satisfaction he found a small hole, evidently a burn made by some careless smoker. Through this aperture he could look out. His range of vision included the greater part of the room, excepting the side on which the table stood. He could see the window and several chairs, as well as the door into the adjoining room, but the door into the hall was out of view, at his right.

While he was looking about, a man came from the next room. Doubtless it was Arima; at least Orme recognized the Japanese who had overcome him in the porter's office at the Pere Marquette the night before. He stepped into the room with a little smile on his brown face. Sealing himself in a chair, he fixed his heels in the rungs and clasped his hands about his knees. He was waiting.

The black eyes rested on the table. To Orme they seemed to be boring through the cover that concealed him, and he hardly dared to breathe, but the Asiatic appeared to observe nothing unusual. Orme wondered at the unfathomable intelligence of those eyes. He had often said of the Chinese and Japanese that he did not trust them for the reason that a Caucasian could never tell what they were thinking about. The racial difference in thought processes he found disconcerting.

A bell rang. Arima went to the door, out of view, and opened it. Orme could hear persons mounting the stairs, and presently the voice of Arima said, "Come in," and the visitors entered the room.

Pausing near the door for a moment, they exchanged a few whispered sentences. Then one of them walked over toward the window. Orme repressed an exclamation, for the figure that came into view was the figure of Portillo—dapper, assertive.

He was dressed as on the night before, and his precious high hat was hugged close to his shoulder.

His eyes roved with an exaggerated assumption of important cunning. Presently he threw over his shoulder a rapid sentence in a foreign tongue. It sounded like Spanish, and Orme inferred that it was a dialect of Portuguese.

The answer came from an oily tongue; the voice was Alcantarante's.

What were the South Americans doing here? It was only a few hours since the Japanese had set on Alcantarante, yet here he was in a stronghold of the enemy—and expected! Had the astute diplomat fallen into a trap? Arima was standing, not far from Portillo. His face was expressionless. Looking from Alcantarante to Portillo and back again, he said in English: "The most honorable gentleman will soon be here."

"That is right," said Alcantarante suavely. "Mention no names."

Arima nodded slightly. The silence grew intense. Orme was relieved when it was broken by another ring of the bell and Arima slipped to the door. Alcantarante moved over beside Portillo and whispered a few words, scarcely moving his lips. His face looked yellow by daylight, and the eyes behind the gold spectacles were heavy-lidded and almost closed. Orme inferred that the night had been sleepless for Alcantarante.

These observations were interrupted by the entrance of the newcomer. He paused at the threshold, evidently to salute, for Portillo and Alcantarante bowed low. Then quick steps crossed the floor and into view came a nervous but assured-looking little figure—a Japanese, but undoubtedly a man of great dignity. His manner of sharp authority would be hard to dispute, for it was supported by a personality that seemed to be stronger than Alcantarante's. Who he was Orme could not guess, but that he was somebody of importance it was easy to see.

The stranger bowed again and addressed himself to Alcantarante. The conversation was carried on in French.

"It is well that you communicated with me, sir," he said, "we were working at cross-purposes when, in reality, our interests were identical."

Alcantarante bowed. "I came to that conclusion late last night," he said. "I do not deny that it would have pleased me to carry the affair through by myself."

"Yes, your position would then have



It Now Remained to Find Something to Take the Place of the Abstracted Documents.

been stronger." The Japanese smiled faintly.

"But," continued Alcantarante, with a slight grimace, "the activity of your men made that impossible. I have no lieutenants such as yours." He shot an ugly gleam at Portillo, whose sudden assumption of feigned humility was in strange contrast to his usual self-assurance.

"As we hold the documents"—the Japanese spoke with great distinctness—"you will necessarily admit our advantage. That means, you will understand, a smaller commission on the next contract."

Alcantarante twisted his face into the semblance of a smile. "Not too small, or we cannot undertake the work," he said.

"No, not too small," the stranger agreed calmly, "but smaller than the last. You must not forget that there are others who would gladly do the same work."

"Yes, but at best they cannot get the terms we get."

"Possibly. That is a matter still to be determined. Meantime we have assumed that our interests in this document are identical. Let us test it."

"One word first," said Alcantarante. "I take it that, if our interests are sympathetic with yours, we may count on your protection?"

"Most assuredly."

"Then—" "Then we shall see. My fairness is clear in that I give you a sight of the document with myself. I might have denied all knowledge of it."

Alcantarante smiled as if to say: "I already knew so much that you could not risk that."

The stranger turned to Arima and said something in Japanese. Arima replied, and the stranger explained to Alcantarante. "I asked about my man Maku. The American struck him on the head last night and injured him. But he is recovering. He is troublesome—some American."

Orme started. His head bumped against the table.

"What's that?" exclaimed Portillo, advancing. "There's something under that table!" He stooped to lift the cover.

One chance flashed into Orme's mind. Quickly he seized the cat, which was still sleeping against his knee, and pushed it under the table cover. It walked out into the room, moving plaintively.

"A cat," said Portillo, drawing back.

Arima explained in English: "It belongs to lady upstairs. Comes down for escape. Shoo! Shoo!" He clapped his hands and the animal bounded to the window-sill and disappeared up the iron steps.

"And now," began the stranger, "shall we examine the documents?"

"One moment," said Alcantarante. "I should first like a clear understanding with you—some words in private." He moved to a corner, and there the stranger joined him. They talked in an undertone for several minutes, Alcantarante gesturing volubly, the stranger nodding now and then, and interjecting a few brief words.

What was going on was more than ever a mystery to Orme. The stranger's reference to "the next contract" strengthened the surmise that the documents in the envelope were connected with a South American trade concession. Alcantarante had plainly concluded that his interests and those of the Japanese were identical. He must have communicated with the strange Japanese the first thing in the morning. That would account for his failure to call at the Pere Marquette at ten o'clock. Learning that the bill had been taken from Orme, and that the coveted documents were in the possession of the Japanese, he had no object in keeping his appointment. As for Portillo, he had become a figure of minor importance.

But Orme did not let these questions long engage him, for he had made a discovery. Where his head bumped against the table, the board above him—solid, as he had supposed—rattled strangely. At the moment he could not investigate, but as soon as the cat

had satisfied the suspicions of Portillo, and Alcantarante and the stranger had retired to their corner, he twisted his head back and examined the wood above him.

The table had a drawer. From the room outside this drawer was concealed by the cloth cover, and Orme had not suspected its existence.

Now, the table was cheaply made. The drawer was shallow and narrow, and it was held in position, under the table, by an open framework of wood. When it was pushed in, it was stopped at the right place by two cleats; there was no solid strip to prevent its being pushed in too far.

Orme put his hand to the back of the drawer. There was a space between it and the table-top.

Cautiously he pushed his hand through the opening. His fingers touched a flat object—a pad of paper, or—the thought made his heart beat—a large, thick envelope. Could Arima have used the drawer as a hiding place?

Slowly he got the edge of the object between his first and second fingers and drew it a little way toward the back of the drawer. A moment later he had it under his eyes.

Yes, it was a long envelope of heavy linen, and there were bulky papers within. The gummed flap was toward him. He was interested to note that, important though the documents seemed to be, the envelope was not sealed with wax.

He remembered what the girl had said: her father's name was written on the address side. He had only to turn it over to learn who she was. In the circumstances such an act might be justified. But she had not wished him to know—and he would even now respect her wish and keep his own promise to her first.

His first thought was to slip the envelope into his pocket, but it occurred to him in time that, if it did indeed contain the documents concerning which Alcantarante and the stranger were disputing, it would be sought and missed long before he could escape from the room. So, taking a pencil from his pocket, he inserted it under the corner of the flap and slowly worked the flap free. The strength of the linen prevented any tearing.

He removed the contents of the envelope—two folded sheets of parchment paper, held together by an elastic band—and thrust them into the inside pocket of his coat. All this was done swiftly and noiselessly.

It now remained to find something to take the place of the abstracted documents. In his pocket were some printed prospectuses of the mine which he had come to Chicago to investigate. In shape and thickness they were not dissimilar to the documents which he had taken. He slipped the prospectuses into the envelope and, wetting his finger, rubbed it along the gummed surface of the flap. Enough glue remained to make the flap adhere, after a little pressure. The job was by no means perfect, but it was not likely to be detected.

At that moment Alcantarante raised his voice and said, still in French: "You are sure, then, that this will not delay the game, but end it?"

"Quite sure," said the Japanese. "Unless the documents are signed before midnight tonight nothing can be done for some time. We have the Germans fixed. They will do what they have thus far agreed to do, but if any technical hitch arises, such as a failure to sign within the time limit, they will decline to renew negotiations. That was all we could get from them, but it is enough—now."

"And for other ships," said Alcantarante, "the commission shall be five hundred thousand."

"Five hundred thousand. Seven hundred and fifty was too much."

"Five hundred thousand in gold."

"In gold."

Orme slipped the envelope back into the drawer and put his eye to the hole in the cover. His position was now more critical, for to open the drawer and get the envelope Arima would have to lift the table cover

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The stranger turned to Arima. "Give us the envelope," he said.

Arima approached the table. Orme crowded back against the wall as far as he could, knowing that the chances of escaping discovery were strongly against him. But he was saved by the very eagerness of the others. They all crowded about Arima, as he lifted the cover, opened the drawer and took out the envelope. So close did they stand that Orme was out of their angle of vision. The table cover fell again, and he was safe. He resumed his position at the peep-hole.

The stranger stepped to the middle of the room, the others gathering around him. With a quick jerk he tore the envelope open, and taking out the papers, ran his eye over them. "What is it?" said Alcantarante. The South American's hand was shaking, and perspiration stood out on his forehead.

The Japanese snarled. "Tricked! They've fooled us. That honorable burglar of yours got the wrong envelope."

Alcantarante snatched the papers. "Prospectus," he read, "of the Last Dare Mining Company. But I do not understand."

The Japanese glared at him angrily. "If you had kept out of this business," he snapped, "and let Maku attend to it, everything would have been right. Now your burglars have spoiled it." He snatched back the harmless prospectuses and tore them in two, throwing the fragments to the floor and grinding them under his heel.

Arima spoke. "Pardon, honorable sir, Maku say the right envelope was taken from the safe. Maku know."

"Ha! Then it was you who were tricked—outwitted. That American reached the tree before you last evening and substituted these papers. Go back to Japan, Arima. I don't need you."

Arima bowed submissively. As for the stranger, his rage gave way to despair.

"What shall I say to the emperor?" he muttered. "What shall I say to the emperor?"

Then his feelings came again under control, he looked calmly at Alcantarante. "Well," he said, "what would you suggest?"

Alcantarante's face was a puzzle. Every shade of doubt, disappointment, anger, suspicion and shrewd deduction passed over it. He was putting into play that marvelous power of concentration on subtle issues that had enabled him to play so brilliantly the role of international under-dog. At last he smiled and spoke.

"Find the American," he said.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. Arima looked at his master, who nodded indifferently and said "Yes, see who it is. It can do no harm now."

Orme heard the door open. What startled him first was the action of Portillo, who stepped back to the wall, his jaw dropping, his face a picture of embarrassment and fright. Alcantarante and the stranger showed amazement.

For a moment they stood thus in silence, and then from the door came a clear voice.

"What? You here, Mr. Alcantarante? And the Japanese minister?"

Orme almost sprang from his hiding place. The voice was the voice of the girl!

## CHAPTER XI.

### The Way Out.

The sound of the girl's voice brought the men in the room to life. Her words were shaded to a tone of fearless scorn which must have bitten deep, for Alcantarante and the Japanese minister looked like schoolboys caught in wrong-doing. The South American gnawed at his lip; the Japanese looked at the floor, and Orme now realized that the manner which had seemed so indicative of a masterful personality was the manner which springs from power—the manner that is built upon the assurance of a tremendous backing.

The tension was broken by Portillo. The little man's dismay suddenly gave way to an eager and voluble excitement, and he rushed across the room, exclaiming: "Oh, my dear miss—"

"No names," commanded Alcantarante, harshly, turning to his subordinate.

"My dear young lady," continued Portillo breathlessly, "I am the victim of your misunderstanding. You will permit me to explain."

She answered with an even, cutting edge in her voice: "You cannot explain, Mr. Portillo."

"But—" he began, blind to her meaning.

"I do not care to hear you," she said; and Portillo slunk back to his former position. From his face it was clear that he had no desire except to get away.

Meantime Alcantarante aroused himself. "My friend here"—he indicated the Japanese—"and myself are here on business which concerns our two nations. Your appearance, I presume, is due to a desire to engage the professional services of Mr. Arima. Or perhaps you were trying to find the fortune teller upstairs." He barely repressed his sneer.

The girl did not answer. She remained by the door, and but for the

attitudes of the others Orme would not have known but that she had gone. As it was, he could read in their bearing the disconcerting effects of her continued disdain.

The Japanese spoke. "Will you enter, miss, or shall we direct you on your way? Arima will come out and talk with you, if you so wish."

Still no answer. To Orme, in his hiding, there was something uncanny in her failure to respond. But he could picture her—Truth, calm in the presence of subterfuge.

"Will you not state your desire?" Again the Japanese. He was smiling now, with the false, politeness of his race.

And then she spoke: "That envelope on the floor was stolen from my father's home. It bears my father's name."

Before Alcantarante could stop him, little Portillo, with some vague hope of making amends, had snatched up the torn envelope and taken it to her. He returned to the range of Orme's vision with an air of virtuous importance.

"The contents," said the girl—"where are the papers?"

Alcantarante and the Japanese looked at each other. It was as if they said, "In view of our failure we might as well make a clean breast of it." But Alcantarante was too cunning to take the initiative in confession. He left that to the Japanese, who spoke unhesitatingly.

"The only papers in the envelope were these." He picked up the torn prospectuses from the floor and held them extended in his hand. "Our surprise is as great as yours."

"Do you expect me to believe that?"

"Whether you believe it or not, my dear young lady, it is true."

There was a moment of silence, then the Japanese continued: "We have reason to think that the envelope was for a time last night in the possession of an American, and that he substituted these prospectuses for whatever the envelope may have held."

Orme's impulse to declare himself was almost irresistible. A man whose instincts were less cautious would have thrown the table over and ranged himself beside the girl. Orme was not fearful, but he knew that the chances of a successful outcome would be lessened by exposure. Even if he and the girl got safely from the room, there would be a pursuit, and the risk of losing the papers would be great.

As for the girl, she clearly was in no danger. These men would not harm her.

But would the assertion of the Japanese lead her to doubt Orme? Would she believe that he had actually recovered the papers the night before and kept them for his own purposes? He remembered that he had given her only the scantiest account of his adventure at the tree, for he had wished to spare her the details of an incident that meant her disappointment as well as his own. She might now readily attribute his reticence to a desire to conceal something.

And then came her reply. Her first words brought a glow to Orme's heart: "I know that you are mistaken. No American has those papers." Orme breathed his relief. Then she added the dubious word—"Unless—"

So she did doubt him after all. Well, he could not blame her. The scene in the room—the frankness of the Japanese, which could only be attributed to discomfiture; the empty envelope; the torn prospectuses on the floor, all these conditions pointed to the truth of the explanation she had heard.

On the other hand, there was his appearance or the lake, an hour or more after the episode on the campus. Might it not occur to her that, had he already secured the papers, he would have had no object in the further pursuit of the Japanese? But, perhaps she would think that he was seeking Arima to sell the papers back to him; or that, in spite of his appearance of surprise, he had been a witness of her abduction and had gone out on the water to save her. There were so many things she might think! Indeed, that dubious word—"unless"—might even signify, "unless he has secured the papers since I last saw him." But no, she would gather from this situation in which she found her enemies that the envelope had not been out of their possession since it was taken from the tree. Orme shut his lips hard. Her doubt of him would have to be endured, even though it shattered his pleasant dream of her complete and sympathetic understanding.

Alcantarante, meantime, was studying the girl with curious eyes. His look was both perplexed and admiring.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

**Accompaniments of Eating.**  
Meals are best taken during those periods when the body is at rest. The time for taking food must not be too short. During the meal it is better not to think of business or serious or, perhaps, even sad things. Our whole and undivided attention should be given to our meals. Pleasant company, light conversation, jokes and stories add to the enjoyment of food.  
—Medical Record.

**Londoners Use Many Mattoes.**  
Four and a half million gross boxes of matches are used in London in a year.